

Members

Rep. Robert Bischoff, Chairperson
Rep. Kreg Battles
Rep. William Ruppel
Rep. Phyllis Pond
Sen. James Merritt, Vice-Chairperson
Sen. Phil Boots
Sen. Richard Young
Sen. James Lewis



STATE FAIR ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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Authority: IC 15-1-1.5-4

MEETING MINUTES¹

Meeting Date: August 1, 2007
Meeting Time: 1:00 P.M.
Meeting Place: Board Room of the Administration Building, Indiana State Fairgrounds, 1202 E. 38th Street,
Meeting City: Indianapolis, Indiana
Meeting Number: 1

Members Present: Rep. Robert Bischoff, Chairperson; Rep. William Ruppel; Rep. Phyllis Pond; Sen. James Merritt, Vice-Chairperson; Sen. Phil Boots.

Members Absent: Rep. Kreg Battles; Sen. Richard Young; Sen. James Lewis.

Chairperson Bischoff called the meeting to order at 1:06 p.m. Introductions were made of the Committee, the Legislative Services Agency staff, and the Fair Commission and Center for Agricultural Science and Heritage staff in attendance. Rep. Phil Pflum was also in attendance.

1. Preliminary Report of the 2007 Indiana State Fair

Chairperson Bischoff stated that this year's Indiana State Fair will be held August 8 through 19, 2007. As always, weather will have a big impact as to the success of the Fair.

¹ Exhibits and other materials referenced in these minutes can be inspected and copied in the Legislative Information Center in Room 230 of the State House in Indianapolis, Indiana. Requests for copies may be mailed to the Legislative Information Center, Legislative Services Agency, 200 West Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2789. A fee of \$0.15 per page and mailing costs will be charged for copies. These minutes are also available on the Internet at the General Assembly homepage. The URL address of the General Assembly homepage is <http://www.in.gov/legislative/>. No fee is charged for viewing, downloading, or printing minutes from the Internet.

Fair Executive Director Cindy Hoye gave the Committee a folder concerning this year's Fair (Exhibit A). This year's theme is the "Year of Corn". Plots of corn have been planted around the grounds as landscaping. The goal of the Fair is to get visitors in and then educate them while they are here. The ticket price has risen for the first time in 7 years. Director Hoye spoke of ongoing projects, such as Phase 3 of the renovation of the 4-H dormitories, due to be completed in 2009. Discussion also ensued concerning the repairs to the South Pavilion. Many of the buildings on the Fairgrounds were constructed, as it was, by Works Progress Administration bricklayers and craftspersons. Senator Merritt complimented the Fair staff on the Fair's renaissance, and commented that the Fair is nationally known as a livestock facility, both during Fair and non-Fair times.

Director Hoye commented that entertainment for the Fair continues to be a challenge, as the entertainment acts are becoming more expensive to book. The staff wants acts to be affordable to the public and still offer choices. Major entertainment is budgeted just as a break-even amount. Free activities at this year's Fair include the Circus Hall of Fame, an antique tractor display, and a showing of works of Brown County artists. Sponsorships for major entertainment are up over last year.

Director Hoye informed the Committee that the State Fair Board has voted to extend the Fair to up to 17 days in the years 2009 through 2011, as a three year experiment including an extra weekend in its schedule. She stated that two Mondays during these scheduled spans might be free days, allowing for cleaning, maintenance of machinery, and thorough disinfecting of the barns, but still will include some activities. Because many school calendars now conflict with the Fair, this would allow visitors more weekend visits. Capacity of the Fair is about 95,000 visitors at a time, and this revised schedule may allow for lesser crowds at one time. There are a few county fairs and vendors that may have conflicts with these days, and the Fair is working with them. There are fairs in other states and counties in other states that have gone to this schedule, and some that are held just on weekends. Discussion ensued concerning the change to a longer yearly Fair, with the committee expressing favor of the idea.

Representative Ruppel congratulated the staff of the Fair and stated that its success is due to the fact that the staff has stayed together as a team during the administrations of the last three governors. Director Hoye thanked the Committee for its attention and support in getting the Fair back on track. Attendance in 2006 was about 870,000, about 820,000 in 2005, and 900,365 in 2004, probably due to picture perfect weather on all dates. In response to Senator Boots, Director Hoye stated that the budget for operation of the Fair is about nine million dollars.

Representative Pond cautioned the Committee that because the Fair receives about two million dollars per year from property taxes (the state fair property tax, IC 15-1.5-8), if the property tax formula is redesigned, that sum will have to be made up from another source.

Joy Rothrock, Director of Legal, Governmental, and Public Affairs for the Fairgrounds, informed the Committee that the Fair Commission and the Center for Agricultural Science and Heritage, Inc. approved a deed giving "the barn" to the Fair Commission. The barn will be moved to the Fairgrounds campus, with the help of \$600,000 contributed by Farm Bureau, Inc. If there is any money left over from the move, the money will go to the Northside Education program, an educational program of the Commission run by Justin Armstrong.

Discussion ensued regarding the problem of parking during the Fair, with continuation of

leasing property from the Indiana School for the Deaf being critical. Employees must park north of the Indiana School for the Deaf and take a shuttle into the campus. Director Hoyer responded to Senator Boots' inquiry by stating that over 30,000 attendees come to the Fair by the train.

2. Report from the Center for Agricultural Science and Heritage (CASH)

Justin Armstrong of the Center for Agricultural Science and Heritage gave the Committee the summer 2007 publication of The Barn Yard (Exhibit B) and reported that the Wonder Trail will be a part of the 2007 Fair. CASH is staying true to its educational mission and is still focusing on distance education along with educational opportunities provided through its van.

3. Other Business

Director Hoyer gave the Committee an overview of Tax v. Earned Revenue (Exhibit C) showing the monies received from riverboat gaming, the state fair property tax, and pari-mutuel wagering. She commented that the earned revenue includes rental of buildings on the Fairgrounds for at least 300 events a year. Responding to Chairperson Bischoff, she stated that horses are trained at the Fairgrounds 365 days a year and that stalls are rented out for the horses at reasonable rates. The rental money helps to maintain the tracks and keep the barns in order. Chairperson Bischoff reviewed the revenue directed to the Fair from riverboat gaming. The sum guaranteed to the Fair each year is approximately \$6.2 million dollars.

Ms. Rothrock furnished the Committee with the dates scheduled for the 2008 through 2011 Fairs (Exhibit D).

4. Select Next Meeting Date

The second meeting of the State Fair Advisory Committee was scheduled for September 20, 2007, at 9 a.m. in the Board Room of the Indiana State Fairgrounds, 1202 E. 38th Street, Indianapolis, Indiana.

5. Adjournment

Chairperson Bischoff adjourned the meeting at 2:22 p.m.